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2019-02-01

Hellman , C M E & Lerkkanen , T M M 2019 , ' Construing oppositions, demarcating a we-ness : The dramaturgy of a live TV debate on the refugee crisis ' , European Journal of Cultural Studies , vol. 22 , no. 1 , pp. 37-59 . <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417719060>

<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/296515>

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417719060>

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Construing oppositions, demarcating a we-ness: The dramaturgy of a live TV debate on the refugee crisis

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ABSTRACT. This study concerns the dramaturgy of a two-hour long live televised debate by the Finnish public service broadcasting company YLE regarding how the country was to answer to increased numbers of asylum seekers in 2015. It provides insight into generic features of live TV discussions for articulating the refugee crisis as a national political concern. It unfolds a media construction “in the making” identifying: (i) the positions that participants are given and taken in the TV discussion context, and (ii) the dramaturgical execution that served to create oppositions and tensions.

The study points out how dramatic compositions of scenes utilized participants’ assumed speakers’ positions and so created action and tensions. Despite efforts of a bold and fresh grasp, the programme channelled a classic polarization construct between ‘us’ (Finnish people) and ‘them’ (refugees) in its mere point of departure. Problem constructs concerned also some wrong and undeserving ways in which the otherhood of the immigrants is performed in a Finnish context. During the live broadcast, refugees were put to the test to demonstrate their compliance with right sorts of otherhood; they were asked to eat Finnish food and show their skills in the Finnish language.

The analysis shows how journalistic and editorial decisions surrounding the dramaturgy of a live TV show actively contribute to the reproduction of certain political setups and elements of blame and shame. It is able to point out a great need for awareness and sensitivity of the imaginary material that orders and underpins journalistic narratives regarding the European refugee situation.

Introduction

Some of the most salient media headlines in 2015 and 2016 concerned the increased amount of refugees fleeing under dangerous circumstances with hopes of gaining asylum in Europe. The situation, early on dubbed ‘the refugee crisis’, was framed a bit differently in different countries. However, two intertwined questions have come to dominate throughout: The first pertains to the amounts of residence permits to be granted, and the second concerns the integration of the arrivals in their new country of residence. In both, the core question concerns the extent of responsibility to be taken by the receiving country (Berry et al. 2016).

European citizens’ perceptions of their responsibility towards refugees rely a great deal on information from the media: most have no first-hand experience of the crisis and live far from geographical crossing-points. (Loren & Straub 2016; Bruno 2016; Szczepanik 2016). This is certainly the case in Finland, a country known for granting only a trifling amount of annual migrants’ residence permits compared to other European welfare states (see Eurostat 2016; BBC.com 9.9.2015; Vasantola 2016; Kankkonen 2016). In 2015 the amount of asylum seekers increased in Finland tenfold to a record high of 32,476 (Ministry of the Interior 2016; Migri.fi 2016), a circumstance that raised a great deal of public attention.

This study concerns a two-hour long live televised discussion by the Finnish public service broadcasting company YLE in October 2015 regarding how the country was to tackle the increased numbers of refugees and integrate them into the Finnish society. The studio discussion, called the A2 Refugee Night (A2-Pakolaisilta), was marketed on the YLE website: “*What worries the refugees in Finland? What worries the Finns? Two hours of hard-hitting talk about the integration of refugees*

in Finland.” (Yle Areena 2017) According to the website, its objective was to make TV- and online-streaming audiences part of, aware of and enlightened about the main dilemmas surrounding the integration of the new arrivals. The core question of the debate came to concern an ambivalence in the ‘we’ construct of the existing inhabitants’ aims of protecting their existing life standards and security, on the one hand, and aspirations of solidarity, hospitality and ‘common-sense humanity’, on the other (cf. King & Wood 2013).

The study’s objective is to interpret a media construction of the refugee crisis ‘in the making.’ The A2 discussion involved certain institutionalized dramaturgical techniques for providing space for different parties and outlooks on the topic dealt with. Generic and journalistic praxis so become intertwined with the ideological work of construing the arrival and reception of refugees as a national concern (Alsultany 2012). The analysis points out ways in which dramaturgical techniques of journalistic story telling in the live studio discussion genre underpins ‘we’ and ‘other’ constructs.

Refugees in the media

Research on how the media portrays refugees and migrants coherently suggests long-lived basic binary images of victims or threats (Horsti 2009b; 2013; Innes 2010; Van Gorp 2005; Hightower 2015; Banks 2012). Both types of constructs contain certain line-ups of interests between an ‘us’ of the citizens of the receiving country and a ‘them’ of the new arrivals. Some studies have pointed out straightforward othering techniques in the media coverage of refugees playing into fear of cultural, religious, and ethnic difference, or e.g. fear of immigrants’ health problems (Kaye 2013; Horsti 2013; Reitmanova et al. 2015). In recent years, the European Romas have received increased media attention subjected to classic techniques of othering, framed as an internal and joint European concern (Kroon et al. 2016; Leudar & Nekvapil 2000).

The ways in which different perspectives embed different levels of sympathy for asylum seekers has been demonstrated in a study by Cooper and colleagues (2017). Examining Australian regional newspapers they found that a positive tone was mostly employed in engaging future-oriented local news which focused on integration through work and training through refugees’ personal stories. In contrast, the reporting that concerned overall national perspectives tended to reflect a broader negative national discourse. (Ibid.) A national outlook on migration seems more likely to channel us-them oppositions and migration critique. This may be traced to the well-known uniting cultural intimacy in nation-state constructs that has shown to inherently carry practices of defensive nostalgia and certain stereotypes of a “them” (Herzfeld 2014). News coverage can also employ practices of cultural proximity to present the asylum seekers as suitable and ‘good’ victims (Szczepanik 2016), unmarking their difference through de-ethnicizing and de-muslimizing techniques (Horsti 2013). Culture-specific media story-telling characteristics as well as geographical and practical distance can influence the tone: Zhang & Hellmueller (2017) showed that the American news covering the European refugee crisis tended to involve more humanitarian views than their German counterparts.

There are not that many media analyses of the European refugee situation, but the literature is growing. A feature that has received attention is the fast spreading situational images of singular tragic destinies of children that have become overall symbols of the refugees’ desperation and suffering (Mortensen 2016; Szczepanik 2016). The UN has produced a content analysis of press materials showing major differences between the reporting in different countries (Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore 2016). Threat themes (to the welfare system or cultural ones) were the most prevalent in Italy,

Spain and Britain. The Swedish press was the most positive towards refugees and migrants, while Britain's right-wing media turned out to be uniquely aggressive in its campaigns against refugees and migrants. Tazzioli & De Genova (2016) studied the use of words and language describing the situation in public speech. They demonstrate that "the migrant crisis," or "the refugee crisis," or the "crisis of the borders of Europe" is construed strictly "external" to the presumed safety and stability of "Europe", erupting always "elsewhere". (Ibid.) The reporting has also shown to actively demarcate the "deserving" refugee from the "undeserving" separating the ones who have earned help and sympathy and those who are not to the same degree entitled to it (Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Szczepanik 2016).

Televised discussions offer a large-scale and institutionally managed forum for public debate (Livingstone & Lunt 1994). The underpinning meaning-making in the live TV show such as the A2 will inevitably draw on an overall mythology of what the refugee situation is all about from an entrance country's perspective (cf. Hightower 2015; Cole 2016).

The A2 discussion programme's first screening had an audience of 467,000 TV and online viewers (Arffman 2016), which is around 10 per cent of the total adult population. The show has since been watched online over 30 000 times (Yle Areena 2017). In the Act on Yleisradio OY (22.12.1993/1380) YLE's core duties are laid out as to serve all citizens and advance democracy. Its ethical standards are based upon the national journalistic guidelines, self-regulated by the Council for Mass Media. (Rasila 2015a-b.) YLE's aims of multiculturalism can be seen as actualizing an inherent ambivalence within its mandate: while the company seeks to embrace a broad audience, it also seeks to avoid annoying this audience (Horsti 2009a).

Dramaturgy

Televised live studio discussions are important institutionalised part of Western public discussion cultures aimed to engage audiences in current events. In live TV studio discussions where many social institutions are represented the subject of the discussion, the structure of the programme and the positions taken and given by the participants are formed by generic pre-expectations, through editorial planning, and also in the live aired situation through ad hoc choices pertaining to journalistic tasks and craftsmanship.

The A2 show is a so called multiparty television discussion, which focuses on a topical political question with the aim of presenting various views on and tensions surrounding a subject (Rautajoki 2014; cf. television audience discussions, Livingstone & Lunt 1994). In this genre, the extent to which the execution of the programme, and particularly how creators and studio hosts steer the representation of perspectives and guests, tends to colour the main messages mediated during the show (Rautajoki 2014).

Connotations surrounding the refugee crisis as a political matter will in the A2 show format heavily rely on editorial work and live-aired journalistic craftsmanship *in the making*. The notion of *dramaturgy* provides a useful logical foundation for discerning a generic room of manoeuvre for mediatized politics in live TV shows. The meaning of 'dramaturgy' is based on the Greek words 'drame' (action and doing) and 'urgy' (process or working) (Cardullo 2000), signifying the study of dramatic composition and the representation of the main elements of drama on a stage. A common element in all dramaturgies is the use of theatrical metaphors to understand human behaviour (Krause & Goering 1995) The most essential elements of dramaturgy are the action and tension created from the conflicts

of agendas between different actors'. These tensions are highlighted in order to engage the audience. (Kantola 1998; Ödeen 1998; Barba 1985.). The dramaturgy notion embeds both the performative dimensions of the TV discussion genre and the significations it brings about.

The main task in a dramaturgical analysis is to draw out the ways in which scenes are scripted and staged as well as how the multifold players subsequently act within and upon those scripts and stagings (Hajer 2005). The work by dramaturgs thus involves the contextualization of the world of a play establishing connections among the text, actors, and audience (Chemers 2010; Cardullo 2000). According to Kantola (1998), dramaturgical analysis emphasizes the question of how the narrative/story wakes the interest and feelings of the audience.

Research has shown that TV talk show hosts' intervention in guests' personal narratives concerns not only the dramatization of the story, but the participants' stories become also evaluated and problematized through hosts' intervention (Thornborrow 2001) The hosts' power and control can be directly visually conveyed by their mobility: *"they are the only persons other than the technical crew who entitled to rise and walk in the studio, selecting speakers, proffering the microphone to members of the studio audience, withdrawing it at their discretion"* (Haarman 2001, p. 32). Control is also exerted through linguistic patterns by the hosts who frame the talk, selecting topic, allocating turns, soliciting and guiding intervention through, for example questions, interruption and formulations (Ibid.) Wood (2001) has analysed the construction of the interaction in the British audience discussion program Kilroy showing how it construes a conflict of expert versus lay discourses. Such clashes of views and interests can be further strengthened through the theme that is being discussed, which for example in the case of the Kilroy program was an 'us and them' confrontation between citizens and police force. (Ibid..)

Material and proceeding

The A2 shows are built around inflammable value discussions regarding perceived rights and wrongs by different counterparts, often involving identity political themes. In 1996 and 2010 the format featured a "Gay Night" on the rights of gay and lesbian couple to marry and form families. According to the YLE live archive, the 2010 Gay Night raised a massive debate in social media, and 20,000 people left the Lutheran or the Orthodox Church within a week's time, in the immediate aftermath of the programme (Kemppi 2013). Critics find the stark confrontational style of the A2 nights as an end and an entertainment agenda in itself (Lehmusvesi 2015).

The studio guests sit in mixed groups on opposite sides of an open space. The 17 invited studio guests of the A2 Refugee Night were to discuss the increased amounts of refugees in Finland in 2015. The programme was broadcast live on channel YLE Two on 6 October 2015. Journalists Kati Leskinen and Wali Hashi served as studio hosts, the latter with a migrant background.

The programme was mapped in terms of main setup of scenes and clips that made up its entity (cf. Krause & Goering 1995). The show consisted of two halves, with a news broadcast in between. The two halves can be viewed as two separate acts of the programme. Scenes and the grounds of transitions/shifts are displayed in Table 1. A shift between scenes was interpreted from the material when the hosts clearly changed the subject of the discussion. For example, after interviewing the project worker and a family from Myanmar now living in Punkalaidun in sequence 7, the host Kati Leskinen leads the discussion from the interview to the whole discussion group starting the sequence 8 which we named as 'Solutions': *Excellent, now we can continue this discussion together and think about*

the solutions after hearing about the Punkalaidun model, thank you for being here, you can go to sit on your own seats now.” Then the second host Wali Hashi continues: *”We continue from this topic. Anyway, quite many people have arrived here lately. I must ask next that should we close the borders? Would that be a solution?”*

Other shifts constituted of pre-recorded inserts; or the camera shifting from the studio setup to another interview site with scripted performances (e.g. sequences 6. & 9.); or video clips (sequences 1. & 11.). The mapping of program structure gave at hand a total of 19 sequences, all displayed in Table 1.

The analysis continued with a deeper reading (visual and written material) of each scene of the Refugee Night with the overall aim was to arrive at an appreciation of the “refugee crisis” as painted by the programme execution. The show was transcribed verbatim in order for researchers to be able to scroll the program in the recreation of the written reconstructed script. The analyses proceeded through several alternating readings of both the audio-visual and written material. Two researchers analysed the show independently looking for meaning-producing characteristics in the program’s dramaturgical execution. Through an internal negotiation two main bundles of techniques were established: (i) participant categories and adherent representative narratives that the programme construed when representing the situation of increased asylum seekers; (ii) dramaturgy of the programme execution utilising these roles and narratives for construing oppositions.

The above mentioned dimensions were studied more closely by discerning the positions and adherent narratives that the participants were given and taken through the TV discussion context and in view of the discussion subject. The basic division of speaker positions can be presumed to have been to some extent calculated by programme makers in advance to fit the aims and scope of the programme. Each position is secured through the role that they are to represent in the political question referred to as the “refugee situation” [wording in programme]. The participants represent backgrounds, interests and adherent model narratives such as for instance the ones of a refugee, an immigration-critical politician, a civil servant working for the Ministry of the Interior, etc. The participants so constitute imaginary model representatives of these societal roles in this particular political question. The positions serve as discursive resources for the dramaturgical execution of the programme (Taylor 2006). They can be emphasized or ignored, enhanced or downplayed through participants’ and journalists’ choices throughout the show

All speakers were ordered into a table according to presumed pre-given roles and representation narratives as construed during the TV show. These are displayed in Appendix I.

The second key dramaturgical dimension appreciated from the material concerns the ways in which the program construed oppositions between the participating subjects and their interests. Dramaturgy concerns both the aesthetic architecture of a piece including its structure, goals and conventions, and the practical philosophy of the practice employed to create a complete performance. (Chemers 2010, .) The TV show script guarantees a certain anticipated constellation of elements the live programme (Nuolijärvi and Tiittula 2000), but the hosts control the order of exchange of opinions between discussion participants. The hosts can anticipate certain types of answers but can never know in advance the ultimate contribution of the studio guests (Rautajoki 2012). In the second analytical task, we proceeded by discerning the meaning-making of the many dramaturgical elements (selection of speakers to be allowed to put forward their viewpoints; ad hoc thematic perspectives; inserts etc.), all of which would underline some conflicting interests between the participant categories (cf. Kantola 1998).

Table 1. The 19 scenes of the Refugee Night TV debate.

I. ACT, sequences 1–9	Content:
1. Fear experienced by refugees	Some refugees talk about their fears; inserts of photographs and accompanying music.
2. You came here from Somalia	Wali Hashi interviews Abdirashiid, who has arrived to Finland as a refugee from Somalia.
3. Fear: refugees versus “majority Finns”	Studio discussion
4. What asylum seekers make of the discussion	Ville Vaarne interviews asylum seekers in the Ylöjärvi emergency shelter
5. Price tag	Studio discussion
6. How to make the filth stop	Wali Hashi reads hate mail printed on the screen & studio discussion about hate speech
7. The Punkalaidun model & a survival story	Kati Leskinen interviews Maarit Tiittanen and a family from Myanmar now living in Punkalaidun
8. Solutions	Studio discussion
9. Porridge	Syrian refugee family on stage with an interpreter; porridge being served by studio host Wali Hashi
II. ACT, sequences 10–19	Content:
10. Different concepts of time	Studio discussion
11. Welcome to Tampere	Video; first days of a Syrian refugee family in Tampere
12. Interview of the Chawa family	Kati Leskinen interviews a Syrian family
13. Acculturation & integration	Studio discussion
14. Support for integration in Finland	Kati Leskinen interviews Ansku and the Himmanens in the audience
15. Refugees and employment	Wali Hashi interviews Abdin Osman and Merja Mikkonen
16. Work, social security system & gratitude	Studio discussion
17. What use are you to Finland?	Ville Vaarne interviews asylum seekers in the Ylöjärvi emergency shelter
18. Conclusion & “We must stick together”	Studio discussion
19. I’m a Finn	Singing together

Results

A total of 67 persons uttered themselves in inserts and discussions during the programme, and 44 of these persons participated in the studio discussion (see Appendix I.). Several participants presented a similar position or political viewpoint on the subjects. Based on how these emerged from the material they were grouped into six main speaker positions: *the negative position*; *the challenging of the negative position*; *critical of the system*; *the “neutral” expert*; *the experiential expert*; *the solidarity position*. The first three groups position themselves highly critical of something. The fourth and the fifth category draw on experience, either institutionally or professionally acquired, or a personal narrative relating to the topic of the discussion. The last category is a group of participants who envision a change for a more welcoming Finland by means of solidarity and cooperation. Each position category can be seen as representing a certain bundle of views on a good society and how it is to be achieved by personal, collective, ideological and political action.

Five main dramaturgical techniques for creating tensions and oppositions between interests during the programme were identified: *casting*, *distinctions between refugees as a “them” and majority Finns as an “us”*; *differentiation between the good and the bad migrant*; *performative acts in programme inserts*; and, *speech of the studio hosts*. These techniques could overlap as they work on different levels throughout the programme. In the next we unfold these positions and the opposition techniques in view of overall dramaturgy

Participant positions

The representatives of the *negative position* were united in the opposing and negative sentiments regarding people seeking asylum in Finland. This negative position was articulated by an entrepreneur and local independent social democratic politician from the west of central Finland (no. 1 in Appendix I), and two Finns Party parliamentarians (3. and 40.), and an un-identified person in the studio audience (43.). These participants represent a narrative in which “majority Finns” will face problems due to the increased migration¹. They express a worry over Finnish economy, over expenses caused by the refugees and for their integration in society. In this participant position, the asylum seekers are seen as an expense and a threat (Innes 2010; Van Gorp 2005; Hightower 2015). This group used metaphors such as “floods of refugees” (3.), a nature metaphor known from the literature on how masses of “others” and “foreign people” are bundled together signifying the unknown (Horsti 2005; Lehtonen & Löytty 2003).

The group of participants who represent *the challenging of the negative position* was represented by a social researcher from the University of Helsinki (2.); a project coordinator who has originally arrived in Finland as a refugee (9.); a radio journalist of a refugee background (11.); and a politician of the right wing National Coalition party (23.). These participants are united in their articulation of a concern about racism. “*This [public] discussion has gone in the direction of disguising racism by fear and in such a way normalising it and I find this extremely oppressive*”, says the radio journalist (11.). The social scientist expresses a need to deal with structural racism, also on the level of discourse: “*I would be careful with repeating mantras [when speaking of refugees] of [refugees] being lazy and needing social welfare, so that they do not become self-fulfilling [epithets], especially when considering what the current societal discussion looks like.*” (2.). The participants of this group draw on humanitarian arguments in particular and refer to international agreements that Finland should follow in order to honour human rights.

The group that represents a position *critical of the system* expresses a general critique against Finnish society and the system facing the migrants. Representatives of this group criticize the Finnish public sector for preventing integration through e.g. unnecessary bureaucracy and some cultural structures. The radio journalist (11.); a pastor and founding member of the Refugees Welcome movement (10.), and an entrepreneur originally from Iran (5.) all point out the difficulties and circumstances working against a meaningful integration of foreigners in the Finnish society. All participants in this groups question the Finnish integration policy. For example, the entrepreneur with an Iranian background (5.) rather surprisingly asks the Head of Migration at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (16.) whether there has been any follow-up regarding the quality of the integration policy: “*how successful has the integration or language learning been for a person who cannot even write in their own language? Who has never gone to school or is illiterate. How is it in such cases... sometimes I feel that there is some sort of self-deception going on [regarding the results of the integration].*” The representatives of this group express the view that minor reductions of bureaucracy and more realistic integration initiatives would facilitate employment and better integration by the newly arrived.

The “*neutral*” *expert position* was represented by participants who did not directly express any personal attitudes or views on asylum seekers or the asylum seeker situation as such during the debate. It could however be assumed that their viewpoint is rather affirmative as they work in areas aiding the integration of migrants and refugees. This position is taken by and given to Head of Development of the Finnish Red Cross (6.); the Director of the Asylum Unit of the Finnish Migration Service (7.); the Social Service Coordinator of the City of Tampere (15.); the Head of Migration at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (16.); the Regional Division Officer of the Finnish Red Cross (14.); and the Manager of a family group home for refugees (41). A typical role and contribution of

this group is an experiential perspective from the viewpoint of an institution, an NGO or some sort of public organisation. For example, the studio hosts ask the Head of the Finnish Migration Service how many asylum seekers have arrived thus far, and how many are likely to be given a leave to stay in Finland. The level of neutrality of their utterances can at times be questioned: for example, what the migrant-critical politician (1.) describes as a fear in his hometown is assessed by the Head of Development for Migration Issues of the Finnish Red Cross as a direct outcome of how the city itself has fed the fear of the foreign.

The experiential expert participants construe their position through narratives of their own personal experience (cf. Thornborrow 2001). The gathering theme is the experience of arriving in Finland as a refugee and later on, finding employment. An entrepreneur (8.), a project leader (9.) and a radio journalist (11.) represent integration success stories. The experiential experts tell their own life stories, as in the case of the journalist who tells the story of his parents' who learned Finnish language through their jobs. The entrepreneur tells the audience how he arrived in Finland in the 1990s and how his industriousness helped him to find a job and how he has advanced in his career. The experiential experts give examples of the difficulties of integration in Finnish society.

The sixth category of participants represents a *position of solidarity*, highlighting the idea that Finns need to get used to people who differ from the majority. Through the right kind of joint action and cooperation Finland can achieve a society where everybody enjoys freedom, security and well-being. This position involves a standpoint against racism and holds a positive outlook on asylum seekers. For example, a Greens politician (4.) and the pastor (10.) represent this position. States the pastor (10.): *"I think we should talk about the kind of society we're building. And you know, racism, I don't have any motivation to point out that here's a racist and here's not, but you know, we all participate in sustaining or changing these structures, we can do it together"*. These participants confirm and affirm utterances of the group that *challenges the negative position*.

The six groups presented above represent the construction of positions regarding the questions discussed during the TV studio discussion programme (cf. Krause & Goering 1995). This constitutes programme makers, and YLE's, envisioned mini-representation of the political arena in the matter of how Finland is to tackle increased asylum seekers and their integration.

Creating oppositions

(1) Casting

While editorial decisions cannot be read of a text, the choice of participants' setup can ontologically speaking be assumed to be part of an editorial planning with possible tensions and conflicts in mind. The heterogeneity of studio guests is an important generic characteristic: the whole point is to let political views clash during the discussion creating entertainment and thought-provoking content. The participants' expected viewpoints are based on different kinds of rationales (personal background, representative of authorities, etc.) that may sometimes incarnate a false balance setup. Within such a journalistic design, the utterances of professionals, researchers or experiential expertise are portrayed as of the same worth as lay people's personal opinions based on beliefs or feelings (e.g. Väliverronen 2015a-b).

In this TV studio format, the mix of knowledge and feelings can be steered by studio hosts' orientation of the discussion, by their selections of questions and the choice of parties to provide answers.

One-time cases may be portrayed as having the same validity as larger sets of knowledge and longer experience. Facts and opinions mix in ways that may cause a great deal of stress for the parties concerned (in this particular case the refugees, whose situation is being discussed). Involving singular descriptive cases can be seen as emphasising subjectivity and personal story-telling, which have been shown to sometimes produce advantageous empathic views on the refugees' situation (Cooper et al. 2017). The casting of the studio guests is no doubt a dramaturgic strategy for creating tensions and oppositions, which is realized through YLE's editorial team's decisions. Based on this material, the evidence of such decisions will inevitably be speculative to its character. Nevertheless, the mapping of participants' positions gives a hint of the logic underpinning the planning.

(2) Us and them

The opening scene of Act 1 (Table 1) addresses the fears of the asylum seekers. The scene features quiet guitar music, while asylum seekers introduce themselves to the camera, talking about their fears repeating the same sentiment: *"If I'm not granted asylum in Finland, I have no future"*. In the second scene, the camera moves to a dark studio. The studio host Wali Hashi is interviewing an asylum seeker from Somalia while the text heading "A2 Refugee Night" is beamed across the studio in large-sized letters, and the stream is filled with photos of crying babies and mothers, all apparently people fleeing their home countries. The short interview raises the question of homesickness and the worst things about being a refugee. The studio lights are lit for the third scene, with the opening of the debate under the lead of the studio hosts *Wali Hashi: [T]oday we will talk about **whether we're still us and them, refugees versus "original Finns"**, or whether we could work together more.* [emphasis by authors].

The myth of "us" and "them" is here construed in a metalanguage, or a secondary speech in that Hashi speaks of the existence of an "us" and a "them" and while doing so he reproduces them (see Barthes 2000). The utterance does not remove the opposition between the actual meaning-based categories of "refugees" and "original Finns", but repeats connotations of "being an original Finn" posited against the concept of "refugees". The "we" of the majority population and TV viewers will not be acquainted with different kinds of refugee background circumstances to the same degree as the everyday meaning-making of "being" of a Finn. The opening lines of the programme can so be viewed as introducing the very main dramaturgical tension of the whole TV discussion narrative. The division is sustained throughout the discussion both by the studio hosts and the representatives of the various narratives. While the rhetoric of the "us" creates a relationship of understanding with the potential TV audience at home (cf. Rautajoki 2014; Wood 2001), the distinction between us and them makes the refugees and asylum seekers appear as "others". A good example is from scene 5, where the costs incurred by asylum seekers in Finland is discussed. Studio host Kati Leskinen asks the politicians among the studio guests how on earth "we" are going to deal with such numbers of asylum seekers and what the price tag is. This is an articulation of a power position in view of "them", who, on their part, produce dilemmas for the "us" who is to properly govern the situation with "them".

(3) The good and the bad migrant

During the programme some notions are repeated as to how proper and good refugees should and should not behave in order to be accepted by and agreeable in the eyes of the "us" category. The representation of the good immigrant category involves, to begin with, being grateful for any help that they receive (cf. Szczepanik 2016). In scene 13 a right wing Member of Parliament (12.) explains that, according to the basic idea of acculturation and integration, someone who has fled for their lives

and is given asylum should be so grateful that they will bear their own responsibility for their integration. This, because they will never want to end up in the same hopeless position again. The idea is thus that the worry over a retreat to the former life situation motivates the newcomer in internalizing the new homeland's culture. The accepted refugee category consists of victims who have a "real need" of protection (Horsti 2009b).

Among the representatives of the negative narrative, representatives of the populist Finns Party (3. and 40.) keep repeating the view of grateful and "good" immigrants. One of them (3.) notes that it is great to see among the studio crowd such "*- - good immigrants who have found a job and who employ Finns*", referring to an entrepreneur with Somali background (8.). Another representative of The Finns Party (40.) underscores that asylum seekers should be grateful and appreciate the amounts of (national) economic resources used to the help asylum seekers (by the helping "us"). The logic is that when the "real victims" who need help have been granted residence in Finland they are expected to show gratitude and it is their duty to be active and good citizens.

A questioning of this dichotomy appears as a deviant position in the setup of the programme. The social science researcher (2.) comments on the parliamentarian's (40.) statement on gratitude by introducing the aspect of ethics. The researcher points out that legal protection is a human right and people should not be made to feel gratitude for that.

The discourse of the good immigrant is also actively reproduced in scene 7 during an interview with three refugees (24., 25., 26.) of a Myanmar family, which channels a successful survival story as the family members have made themselves at home and found employment in Finland. In addition to getting integrated in Finnish occupational life, the Finnish language or just having a positive outlook on learning Finnish is construed as a characteristic of the good refugee. In scene 12, in an interview with a Syrian refugee family, studio host Leskinen asks what the family plans to do in order to learn Finnish and find employment. The father (31.), says that they intend to do everything they can and is commended for this by Leskinen. The studio host similarly praises the family because they are all able to say something in Finnish, which they have come to master through watching Finnish TV. The members of the family are presented as examples of immigrants who are positive towards the Finnish culture and Finland as a country and thus deserve their residence permission. In an insert in scene 17, YLE-journalist Ville Vaarne interviews asylum seekers at the Ylöjärvi emergency shelter, asking them of what use they see that they could be for Finland [*"mitä hyötyä"*]. Almost all interviewees mention their schooling backgrounds and hopes of future employment.

In scene 5 studio host Hashi asks a Somali entrepreneur (8.) whether the Somalis in Finland create more costs than gains – a statement that has earlier been claimed by a Finn's party politician (3.). The entrepreneur declares calmly that he is an employer and a tax payer; he also says that there are plenty of working Somalis in Finland. "*We're a part of the Finnish people, we're proud, we work and pay taxes.*" In scene 16 co-host Leskinen makes a comment about one of the attending refugees (39.) that he had not received state benefits for any lengthier period, to which the refugee counters by saying that he has not received any benefits whatsoever and clarifies that he had to wait for a work permit for three months. Leskinen smiles and says: "*Right, I was worried there that you had been working illegally. Good job.*" She then turns to ask the people in the studio whether the Finnish social security system encourages laziness. Such talk about laziness, relying on social benefits and working illegally construes an image of the contemptible migrant who is not only costly but also a threat to morale and security (cf. Horsti 2009b). The host's comment can be understood through a dramatization that is also highly evaluative and problematizing for the subject (cf. Thornborrow 2001).

(4) Acts of performance

The A2 Refugee Night show involved inserts with different types of performative acts outside the discussion and interview formats – all of which actively contributed to creating oppositions. For example, in scene 6 one of the studio hosts reads racist hate speech comments from the YLE News Facebook page. This sequence is followed by a discussion on the phenomenon of “hate speech”, the core question being “when can we see an end to it all”? [‘all’ surpassingly signifying an ongoing public hate rhetoric]

A performative insert during the live TV show that came to be greatly criticized afterwards was situated at the end of the first act when studio host Leskinen called in a Syrian family with a translator. The discussion with the family, who had just arrived in Finland, is interrupted by the entry of the second studio host who starts serving the family porridge from a serving carriage. The serving of porridge is a reference to a news story that had spread the same autumn about asylum seekers at a reception centre in the city of Oulu who had expressed dissatisfaction with the food at the premises. The porridge scene can be seen as a humiliating and othering act of offering food to people in an untypical place (TV studio), and filming them while they eat, while in “real life” the very same people are dependent on aid and support to survive. The studio host then turns to ask who else in the audience would like some porridge and points out laughing that the asylum seekers from Mänttä-Vilppula who had been interviewed previously did not raise their hands. Others in the audience are served porridge, and after a few minutes of discussion about the news story on refugees complaining about food, the programme is cut to make room for the evening news. The porridge eating scene strongly channels criteria of the good migrant and bad migrant dichotomy – do you like our food or will you complain? Studio host Hashi asks the father of the Syrian family to send his regards to the reception centre where the inhabitants were dissatisfied with the food.

Towards the end of scene 18, co-host Wali Hashi says that the only way “we can do this” [supposedly tackle the refugee situation in Finland] is by sticking together. He then invites the studio guests to join in a song. The participants and the audience come together in the centre of the studio and start singing (the originally Italian) tune of “I’m a Finn” to the piano accompaniment of co-host Kati Leskinen. The performance kicks off by short video clips of asylum seekers singing the first verses in Finnish outdoors summer sceneries, followed by the studio guests and the audience joining in.

What lies behind the performance is probably an idea that singing this particular song will gel the sentiments of the night, encapsulated by Hashi’s concluding remarks. In the context of the Refugee Night this translates into working together; “this is how we will be able to make it”. Nevertheless, singing together channels yet again ambivalence: the song is about everybody being Finns, even if some of the participants are asylum seekers and not Finnish at all. The choice of song leaves the question of what it means to be Finnish pending, and yet invested with the cultural content of this particular song as in being Finnish would be an added value in itself.

(5) Speech by studio hosts

When the discussion deals with the theme of fear in scene 3, Hashi asks who in the audience feels that refugees will bring along enhanced criminality. The floor is given to an entrepreneur and local councillor from Kauhava (1.), who describes the fear of asylum seekers after which Hashi asks the researcher (2.) whether such fears are justified. The researcher comments that many people undoubtedly have real fears but, also, many do not, and these two views have to be kept separate. After this reply, the floor is given to a True Finn party representative (3.), who expresses that the fear is justified

and citing as evidence statistics according to which immigrants from certain countries commit to a greater extent some crimes in comparison to “original Finns” or immigrants from other countries. Yet again Hashi asks the researcher whether this is true, and the researcher chooses to focus on certain factors underpinning likelihood of committing crime such as failure of integration. The praxis of giving experts the floor only after the agenda has been set could be seen as a way of inviting an expert judge that will enlighten how things really are. However, according to rules of interaction the praxis has quite the opposite effect and the expert is so put in a defending speakers’ position which debilitates their contribution (Simon-Vandenberg 2007).

The researcher, questioning the negative position, typically presents a counter-argument to the representatives of the negative narrative. This opposition is manifested and reproduced by the way that hosts alternate between the speakers. At the same time, the studio guests themselves also uphold the adversarial structure by reproducing the constellation. Some attempts are made by the above mentioned researcher to break the polarization of good and bad. Others play more along the setup expectations: the project manager (9.), throws confrontations to the representatives of the negative narrative, targeting especially one of the Finns Party members (3.).

The studio hosts consciously encourage further confrontation, especially between guests with different political partisan background. When this happens, the discussion appears as reproducing a party political field in the studio. For example, in scene 13 the National Coalition Party MP (12.) argues that the whole question of Finnish integration policies will have to be totally rethought in the future. Studio host Leskinen intervenes and interrupts: *“Hey, why don’t you tell us now what the government strategy is to integrate these people, when some of these asylum seekers will stay. Then the opposition will stand against this and let us have a better plan!”*

Host Hashi continues to draw on political partisan divisions by turning to the Finns Party MP (3.), laughing: *“Let’s bring the Finns Party into the combat!”* Hashi is about to follow the contribution by this MP with another comment by a representative of the negative position, but Leskinen firmly sticks to the party political setup: *“No way, I want the opposition to air their opposition!”* This is when the Green Party MP and a representative of the solidarity narrative (4.) gets to have her say. The acts of the studio hosts thus make the main and governing basic political narrative the one where both the solidarity narrative and the migration sceptical stances need to be justified. They are equal opinion traits that seem to be equally valuable to understand the subject of the TV discussion.

The way in which the presenters call on speakers is also commented on during the discussion. In scene 16, when the discussion turns to addressing questions of employment, social security system and gratitude, the researcher (2.) points out to the hosts: *“You should perhaps call on the speakers in a more equal manner seen from a political perspective.”*

Conclusions

The study of the dramaturgical realisation of the A2 programme offers a rare opportunity to demonstrate the ways in which generic, editorial and journalistic praxis contribute to the media construction of the refugee situation “in the making”. The analysis identified and mapped two bundles of techniques that actively contributed to a political construction of a Finnish national viewpoint at the refugee situation. Through these techniques in the execution of the A2 show the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company YLE came to actively (re)produce representations of certain standpoints of the parties concerned.

The first techniques concerned how certain speakers' positions were given and taken and how they created a mediated political mini-representation of the stakeholders in "the refugee situation". Furthermore, we analysed how the programme execution utilized these and other roles for construing oppositions. Five partly overlapping ways in which this was achieved in the programme were identified.

The participant categories and the opposition dramaturgy translates into a main story that can be summarized in the following conclusions:

To begin with, the programme's point of departure and basic *raison d'être* is a Finnish "us" construct. The assumed problem is the arrival of the "other" and all the wrong ways that this "otherhood" sometimes incarnate (not working, only costing the Finnish society, not liking porridge or not making the effort to learn Finnish). The people in the programme who represent this otherhood are even put to test of their compliance with the right sort of "otherhood" and/or "sameness" on live television. They are asked for example to say something in Finnish, to eat porridge and reveal the extent to which they have lived on public support. The result is a setup in which the weaker part is demanded signs of "real misery" and great gratitude for help. The approval from the majority "us" is at the outset formulated as conditional according to these codes of being. This is actively reproduced in the dramaturgy of the programme.

Second, the ways in which alternative critically questioning constructs were provided discursive space during the programme pushes them to the margins of the main polarized narrative. Critical reflective and questioning utterances were not followed up by the hosts, and hence not allowed to problematize the main construction constellations during the live broadcasted show. Such viewpoints seemed to be viewed as beside the political setup that was informing the main storyline setup.

Third, the ways in which the execution of the programme is realized construes a false balance between opinions and expertise. Some studio guests had long experience of different concrete and structural questions of integration, others again, had opinions based on observations of private experience or information from the media. The utterances by experts were not given any added weight, but were treated as either equally important as the opinions, or just as complicating notifications in the margins of the main story of the programme. Furthermore, they were given space in moments in which their perceptions needed to be defended or justified.

The TV programme analysed in this study serves as an example of how generic demands of this TV show format and a national worry-perspective colour the dramaturgy in which we tell media stories about the refugee crisis. The relevance applies not only to this particular TV programme, but its scheme is in line with previous research on how migrants are presented in European mass media at large. Based on the analysis of this study, however, we see that further ethical assessments of the journalistic work surrounding the refugee crisis is needed, both generally speaking, and more specifically concerning the A2 Refugee Night programme. A greater awareness and sensitivity of the imaginary material that orders and underpins journalistic narratives on the European refugee situation must be actively integrated into journalistic praxis.

End notes

¹ No separation was made between migrant concepts: refugees, migrants and asylum seekers were just conceptually bunched together as a group that wants to come to Finland.

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APPENDIX I

	PERSON	ROLE	ATTITUDE TO ASYLUM SEEKERS	FUNCTION	POSITION
1.	MIKA KANKAANSYRJÄ	Entrepreneur and local councillor from Kauhava, independent representative of the Social Democratic Party	Critical	Fear & concern; People are afraid, “the voice of the people of Kauhava”; Shared responsibility; there should be less bureaucracy	Negative & critical of the system
2.	KARIN CREUTZ	Researcher, University of Helsinki	Not immediately evident	Academic researcher’s approach; introduces structural aspects	Challenges the negative position & critical of the system
3.	JUHO EEROLA	Member of Parliament (MP), Finns Party	Critical	Justified fears of “original Finns”; doubts whether Finland is able to integrate immigrants; development aid should be scaled down more	Negative narrative
4.	EMMA KARI	MP, Greens	Positive	Has lived close to a reception centre; we need to get used to difference and diversity and need to be more receptive	Solidarity narrative
5.	FARZAD MOGHADDAM POUR	Entrepreneur; came to Finland from Iran in 1999	Critical	All nations are afraid of strangers. Refugees are prone to crime under heavy mental stress; those who complain about food have not witnessed war	Critical of the system
6.	JOHANNA MATIKAINEN	Head of Development for Immigration Programmes, Finnish Red Cross	Not immediately evident	Sees the large number of volunteers as a statement; will to help. Scaremongering in Kauhava. Practice will hopefully prove fears unfounded.	Neutral expert
7.	ESKO REPO	Director, Asylum Unit, Finnish Immigration Service	Not evident		Neutral expert
8.	ABDI OSMAN	Entrepreneur, came to Finland as a refugee from Somalia in the 1990s	Positive	Represents Somalis; We are part of the Finnish people and want to work and pay taxes; willing to help asylum seekers through employment; Finland needs refugees	Experiential expert
9.	MARYAN ASKAR	Project manager	Positive	Challenges Eerola; encourages Finns to get to know immigrants and asylum seekers	Experiential expert & challenging the negative position
10.	MARJAANA TOIVIAINEN	Pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Church, founder of RefugeesWelcome	Positive	We can do better; talks about housing immigrants in homes	Solidarity narrative
11.	RENAZ EBRAHIMI	Journalist, Radio Helsinki, came to Finland as a refugee child	Not evident	Fear is used to cover up and normalise racism; need for more discussion	Critical of the system, challenging the negative position, experiential expert
12.	SUSANNA KOSKI	MP, National Coalition Party	Not evident	Need to rethink integration policy in the future; refugees should be grateful; integration guided by this idea	
13.	MAARIT TIITTANEN	Project worker in Punkalaidun	Positive	Talks about the Punkalaidun	
14.	ARI SAARINEN	Chief of Preparedness in Häme, Finnish Red Cross	Not evident	Reception centres have a great impact in terms of job creation	Neutral expert
15.	MERITA SAAJOS	Social service coordinator, City of Tampere	Not evident	Works within integration services at the City of Tampere; integration is well-being for the whole family	Neutral expert

16.	KRISTINA STENMAN	Migration Director, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	Not evident	Talks about integration work in Finland	Neutral expert
17.	RAJKUMAR SABANADESAN	Consultant, came to Finland as an asylum seeker from Sri Lanka in 1994	Not evident	Underlines gratitude	
18.	WALI HASHI	Studio host, journalist, came to Finland from Somalia	Not evident	Presents the programme, interviews guests	
19.	KATI LESKINEN	Studio host, journalist	Not evident	Presents the programme, interviews guests	
20.	STUDENT OF KALLIO UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS	Audience member	Positive	Shares own experience; adults are scaremongering	
21.	ASYLUM SEEKING MAN	Audience member; Asylum seeker, Mänttä-Vilppula reception centre	-	Interviewed by Leskinen on the point of anti-asylum seeker demonstrations. Misunderstanding	
22.	SAMI KOIVISTO	Social media journalist, YLE News; audience member	Not evident	Moderates Facebook page of YLE News	
23.	MUHIS AZIZI	Local councillor in Turku, National Coalition Party; audience member	Positive	Need to consider decision makers' views; criticises pigeonholing by Kankaansyrjä	Challenging the negative position & critical of the system
24.	TAW NYING	Came to Finland from Myanmar as a refugee; family father	-	Survival story from Punkalaidun; successful integration	Refugee narrative
25.	EH LER BLEH	Came to Finland from Myanmar as a refugee; family daughter	-	Survival story from Punkalaidun; successful integration	Refugee narrative
26.	"TITIKA"	Came to Finland from Myanmar as a refugee; family mother	-	Survival story from Punkalaidun; successful integration	Refugee narrative
27.	UNKNOWN MAN IN THE AUDIENCE	Audience member	Reserved	Wonders if Finland can afford to help, expenses	Negative narrative
28.	UNKNOWN WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE	Audience member	Not evident	A Kurd and a Finn; Finnishness stems from upbringing	
29.	AHMED HASSAN	Interpreter	Not evident	Interpreter of the Syrian family	
30.	FATEMH YOUSED ALMSRE	Mother of Syrian family, asylum seeker	-	Shares experiences of family integration in Tampere; video and studio interview	Refugee narrative
31.	ZAKWAN M. DIEB CHAWA	Father of Syrian family, asylum seeker	-	Shares experiences of family integration in Tampere; video and studio interview	Refugee narrative
32.	ZAHER	Daughter of Syrian family, asylum seeker	-	Shares experiences of family integration in Tampere; video and studio interview	Refugee narrative
33.	ELDER SON	Elder son of Syrian family, asylum seeker	-	Shares experiences of family integration in Tampere; video and studio interview	Refugee narrative
34.	YOUNGER SON	Younger son of Syrian family, asylum seeker	-	Shares experiences of family integration in Tampere; video and studio interview	Refugee narrative
35.	ANSKU	Audience member; came to Finland from Congo as an asylum seeker	-	Integration has been helped by Finnish Red Cross, volunteer friend visitor scheme with the Himanens	Refugee narrative
36.	LEENA HIMANEN	Audience member, volunteer friend visitor with the Finnish Red Cross	Positive	Support person for Ansku, integration possible by living ordinary lives together	

37.	PETRI HIMANEN	Audience member, volunteer friend visitor with the Finnish Red Cross	Positive	Support person for Ansku, integration possible by living ordinary lives together	
38.	MERJA MIKKONEN	Entrepreneur, Punkalaidun	Positive	Talks about the Punkalaidun model; successful integration	Experiential expert
39.	ALI OSMAN	Abdi Osman's nephew, came to Finland three months ago	-	An example of "a good and working immigrant"	Refugee narrative
40.	LAURA HUHTASAARI	Audience member, MP, Finns Party	Critical	Asylum seekers should be grateful	Negative narrative
41.	MIKKO VÄLISALO	Audience member, Manager, Espoo Family Group Home	Not evident	Successful integration is not impossible; integration ("making yourself a home") is the right term	Neutral expert
42.	IISAKKI PETRONEN	Audience member with many skills and competences	Not evident	Industrious immigrant with many skills and competences; hard to find a job	Experiential expert
43.	UNKNOWN PERSON FROM KAUHAVA	Audience member	Not evident	Pressing need to find swift employment for immigrants, but there are no jobs	Critical of the system
44.	PASI MÄKINEN	Audience member, managing director of Pirkanmaa Entrepreneurs	Positive	Finland needs immigrants as future labour force	Critical of the system